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# Evidence-Based Practices in Secondary Transition

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A literature review was conducted to identify evidence-based practices in secondary transition using quality indicator checklists for experimental research. Practices were categorized by the Taxonomy for Transition Programming. Overall, 32 secondary transition evidence-based practices were identified. Two practices had a strong level of evidence, 28 had a moderate level of evidence, and 2 had a potential level of evidence. The majority of practices represented instruction of skills within the category of Student Development. No evidence-based practices were identified in the category of Interagency Collaboration. Findings provide practitioners with a set of evidence-based practices for improving transition services and researchers with an agenda for conducting future research.

**Keywords:** *secondary transition; career and vocational; high school; research*

In an effort to improve educational outcomes for all children, Congress now requires schools and educators to use instructional programs or practices grounded in scientifically based research (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Scientifically based research was first defined in No Child Left Behind (NCLB) as “research that involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs” (NCLB, 20 U.S.C 7801 § 9101[37]). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA; 2004) also used the same definition when it required that special education and related services and supplemental aids and services outlined in a student’s Individual Education Program be based on peer-reviewed reports to the “extent practicable” (IDEA, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.).

In an effort to begin to determine educational practices based on “scientifically-based research” the Institute of Education Science (IES) established the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC). The WWC conducts systematic reviews and posts results on their website in seven areas including beginning reading, English language learners,

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early childhood education, character education, elementary school math, middle school math, and dropout prevention. Although IES and WWC acknowledge that different methodologies are useful for answering different research questions, their gold standard has been the use of randomized clinical trials.

Also in response to the call for “scientifically based research” practices, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) has emerged as a leader for the field of special education. First, through its Division of Research, it established a task force to address these issues. One of the outcomes of this task was a special issue of *Exceptional Children* (“Criteria,” 2005). In the first article, Odom, Brantlinger, Gersten, Horner, Thompson, and Harris (2005) used the term “evidence-based practice” to refer to educational practices that have been demonstrated effective based on quality research. In keeping with this theme, we will use the term evidence-based practices throughout. In addition, Odom et al. recognized the potential contributions of various types of educational research. The remaining four articles in the special issue proposed a set of quality indicators for group and quasi-experimental research (Gersten et al., 2005), single-subject research (Horner et al., 2005), correlational research (Thompson, Diamond, McWilliam, Snyder, & Snyder, 2005), and qualitative studies (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Puguch, & Richardson, 2005) to be used for identifying evidence-based practices in special education. Second, through its Professional Standards and Practices Committee, CEC is developing a process for identifying evidence-based special education practices (Council for Exceptional Children, 2008) based on the quality indicators published in *Exceptional Children* in 2005. As a result, CEC has explicitly acknowledged the value of different research methodologies for answering different research questions.

Although IES and CEC are helping to focus the fields of general and special education on evidence-based practices, to date little of the work has been related to secondary transition. An exception is the *What Works Transition Research Synthesis Project* (Grant # H324W010005) funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The *What Works Transition Research Synthesis Project* reviewed and synthesized 20 years of research in the area of transition of youth with disabilities (Alwell & Cobb, 2006a). Systematic reviews of interventions for teaching functional life skills, social/communication skills, transition planning/ coordinating, and self-determination are available at [http://www.nsttac.org/ebp/what\\_works.aspx](http://www.nsttac.org/ebp/what_works.aspx). Although these syntheses provided valuable information to the field of secondary transition, their search parameters

primarily reflected IES standards, which limited the use of research involving single subject experimental designs to those that reported effect sizes or provided data to allow effect sizes to be calculated.

Recently, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, funded the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC; Grant # H326J050004) to assist states and local education agencies in building their capacity to implement effective transition education and services that improve postschool outcomes. To do this, one of NSTTAC’s objectives has been to identify and disseminate evidence-based practices in secondary transition. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to summarize the findings of a comprehensive review of the literature designed to identify evidence-based practices in secondary transition. We used quality indicators and evidence-based practice guidelines from the special issue of *Exceptional Children* as the basis for our review.

## Method

### Selection Procedures

Studies used to establish the secondary transition evidence-based practices came from the NSTTAC literature database. The NSTTAC literature database was developed using a multistep process by (a) conducting an initial electronic search, (b) reviewing reference lists of related articles, (c) conducting hand searches of peer-reviewed journals, and (d) updating the electronic search by replicating the initial procedures.

First, an electronic search of ERIC databases was conducted including Sociological Abstracts, Social Work Abstracts, Education Research Complete, Academic Search Premier, MasterFile Premier, and PsychInfo to identify all journal articles related to secondary transition. Full and truncated versions of the following search terms were used related to the following: (a) students’ ages, including students, youth, adolescents, and young adults; (b) disability status, including disability and specific disability labels (i.e., autism, behavior disorder, blind, cognitive disability, disability, disabilities, handicapped, deaf, developmental disability, emotional disability, emotional disorder, health impairment, hearing impairment, learning disability, mental retardation, orthopedic impairment, physical disability, severe disability, significant disability, speech language impairment, traumatic brain injury, visual impairment, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, attention deficit disorder, Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder [ADHD], and Attention Deficit Disorder [ADD]); (c) transition services, including

vocational education, community-based instruction, junior high school, high school, school-to-work transition, educational objectives, self-care skills, career education, leisure skills instruction, life skills instruction, self-determination instruction, technical education, transition education, transition focus, transition practice, and transition service; and (d) adult life, including outcomes, post-school, postsecondary, employment, independent living, higher education, graduation, outcomes of education, postsecondary education, employment status, continuing education, adult education, postschool outcomes, school-based outcomes, career training participation, community integration, community participation, independent, job training participation, leisure skills, postsecondary education attendance, postsecondary education completion, postsecondary education retention, recreation access, recreational participation, residential access, and residential independence.

### **Inclusion Criteria for NSTTAC Literature Database**

To be included in the literature database, articles needed to meet the following criteria: (a) published between 1984 (i.e., Will's 1984 definition of transition) and March 2008, (b) included at least one student with a disability as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act of 2004 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 who received education services through a local education agency in a non-elementary and non-postsecondary school setting, inclusive of ages 11 to 22 years, and (c) included independent variables or dependent variables aligned with one of the five areas of the Taxonomy for Transition Programming (Kohler, 1996) or clearly linked to a post-secondary outcome.

The five areas of the Taxonomy include (a) student-focused planning (e.g., student participating in individual education plan [IEP] development), (b) student development (e.g., teaching employment skills, teaching life skills), (c) interagency collaboration (e.g., creating frameworks for delivering services collaboratively), (d) family involvement (e.g., training families in self-determination), and (e) program structures (e.g., allocating resources to provide transition services). The Taxonomy was used to organize identified practices because it is widely accepted as a framework for comprehensive secondary transition education and services in secondary transition. The Taxonomy was developed as an outcome of four studies that identified effective secondary transition practices supported with evidence through a review of the literature (Kohler,

1993), an analysis of exemplary transition programs identified through evaluation studies (Kohler, DeStefano, Wermuth, Grayson, & McGinty, 1994), a meta-evaluation of model demonstration transition program outcomes and activities (Rusch, Kohler, & Hughes, 1992), and a concept mapping process (Kohler, 1996). More recently, Kohler and Chapman (1999) and Kohler and Field (2003) found that the practices identified in the original model were reflected in more current secondary transition research.

From an initial list of more than 12,000 references, researchers read titles and electronic abstracts to exclude articles that were not related to our purpose, resulting in 2,739 abstracts. Examples of articles that were excluded because of unrelated content included transition from preschool to kindergarten, transition of older adults to a nursing home, and medical studies including experimental drug trials. Researchers read each of the 2,739 abstracts, reducing the database to 1,302 potential articles. Interrater reliability on this phase of the search process was 86.8% agreement on all of the 2,739 abstracts. The database was managed using *EndNote* (2006).

Next, we began to examine the 1,302 potential articles from the review of abstracts, as well as the reference list from the literature review conducted by the *What Works in Transition Research Synthesis Project* that included articles published through 2005. In addition, reference lists from literature reviews conducted by other experts in the field of secondary transition (e.g., transition assessment, transition for students with autism) were reviewed to identify potential articles for inclusion. Researchers also conducted a hand search of *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals* and *Exceptional Children*. Finally, references were identified within articles reviewed. During this phase of the selection process, we eliminated articles for review if participants, setting, or skills did not match inclusion criteria, resulting in a database of 1,069 articles.

Because this process only included articles published through 2005, an additional electronic search was conducted to identify possible articles published between 2005 and March 2008. This review identified an additional 237 potential references for a total of 1,306 possible articles. These articles were then reviewed for possible inclusion in the evidence-based literature review.

### **Inclusion Criteria for Evidence-Based Literature Review**

To be included in the secondary transition evidence-based practices literature review, articles must have been either (a) systematic literature reviews which clearly

**Table 1**  
**National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center's (NSTTAC)**  
**Decision Rules for Determining Levels of Evidence**

Levels of Evidence of Causal Inference	Group Experimental Designs	Single Subject Designs	Literature Reviews and Meta-Analyses
Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 acceptable quality or 2 high quality</li> <li>• High quality = must meet 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9 and 10, and 5 or 7 of EQIs, and at least 4 of the DQIs</li> <li>• Acceptable = must meet 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9 and 10, and 5 or 7 of EQIs, and at least 1 of the DQIs</li> <li>• Must calculate ES or report data that allow for calculation</li> <li>• There is no contradictory evidence from a study reflecting strong evidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 high-quality studies</li> <li>• High quality = meets all QIs</li> <li>• 3 independent research teams</li> <li>• Must have a functional relationship</li> <li>• There is no contradictory evidence from a study reflecting strong evidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive or systematic literature reviews</li> <li>• Described search methods and inclusion criteria</li> <li>• Provided a quantitative summary of data</li> <li>• If QI review; majority of articles were high quality</li> </ul> <p>Meta-analysis has overall ES &gt; 0.40 or PND &gt; 70%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If both quasi and true group experimental studies, provided analysis of ES for each study design separately</li> </ul>
Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 acceptable quality or 1 high quality</li> <li>• Must calculate ES or report data that allows for calculation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 high- or acceptable-quality studies</li> <li>• Acceptable = meets all QIs except 2, 11, and one of 17 through 20</li> <li>• 1 to 2 independent research teams</li> <li>• Must have a functional relationship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other comprehensive or systematic literature reviews which describe search methods but do not calculate ES or PND</li> <li>• If QI review; majority of articles were acceptable quality</li> </ul>
Potential (Needs additional research)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 acceptable quality</li> <li>• Must calculate ES or report data that allow for calculation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 or 2 high or acceptable studies</li> <li>• 1 or 2 independent research teams</li> <li>• Must have a functional relationship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>

Note: EQI = Essential Quality Indicators; DQI = Desirable Quality Indicators; QI = Quality Indicators; ES = Effect Size; PND = Percent of Non-Overlapping Data.

described their search procedures and quantified results or (b) group or single subject experimental studies that met specific quality criteria. As a result, 240 literature reviews and intervention studies were identified as potentially contributing to the evidence base for identifying secondary transition practices.

Once an article was identified for possible inclusion in the current literature review, it was reviewed twice. First, reviewers used a 103-item content review form to record information from each article regarding (a) setting, (b) population, (c) study design, (d) independent variable, including aligning with the Taxonomy, (e) dependent variable, and (f) results. An item-by-item analysis of coding forms was completed to calculate a percentage of agreement for reviewing articles. The mean interrater agreement for study content on 25 reviewed articles (approximately 10% of the studies considered for this review) was 95.2%.

Next, authors used a 20-item quality indicator checklist for experimental research designs or an 8-item quality

indicator checklist for literature reviews to determine the quality of the research study. The quality checklist for single subject designs was developed based on criteria from Horner et al. (2005) and the quality checklist for group experimental research was developed based on criteria from Gersten et al. (2005). The checklist used to examine the quality of literature reviews was developed with the input of a panel of special education researchers, which included researchers from the *What Works in Transition Research Synthesis Project*. Mean interrater agreement on the quality indicator checklist calculated for four literature reviews was 96.9%, 93.2% calculated for 6 group experimental studies, and 89.9% calculated for 15 single subject research studies.

Finally, articles that met the criteria for high- or acceptable-quality studies were then used to develop the evidence-base for a secondary transition practice. (See Table 1 for decision rules used to determine strong, moderate, or potential levels of evidence.) Researchers



**Table 2**  
**Summary of Evidenced-Based Practices in Student-Focused Planning**

Practice	Level of Evidence	Current Evidence
Involving students in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidenced based on 1 acceptable-quality systematic literature review of 16 studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test, Mason, Hughes, Konrad, Neale, &amp; Wood (2004)</li> </ul>
<i>Self-Advocacy Strategy</i>	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality group experimental study and 4 acceptable-quality single subject studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hammer (2004)</li> <li>• Lancaster, Schumaker, &amp; Deshler (2002)</li> <li>• Test &amp; Neale (2004)</li> <li>• Van Reusen &amp; Bos (1994)</li> <li>• Van Reusen, Deshler, &amp; Schumaker (1989)</li> </ul>
<i>Self-Directed IEP</i>	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality group experimental study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Martin et al. (2006)</li> </ul>

consulted the panel of special education researchers to establish criteria for identifying evidence-based practices from the literature based on the recommendations from an issue on special education research published in *Exceptional Children* (2005) and the work of the IES. Practices with strong, moderate, and potential levels of evidence (see Table 1) were identified from systematic literature reviews (including meta-analyses), group and quasi-experimental, and single subject research.

Sixty-three studies met criteria as high- or acceptable-quality group or single subject intervention studies, or were a comprehensive literature review or meta-analysis, and were thus able to contribute to the evidence base for secondary transition practices. Once the number of studies needed to establish a strong level of evidence for a practice was identified, additional articles related to that practice were not reviewed.

## Results

Overall, 32 secondary transition evidence-based practices were identified. The majority of practices represented instruction of skills within the Student Development area of the Taxonomy. Two practices were supported with strong evidence, 28 were supported with moderate evidence, and 2 were supported by a potential level of evidence. No evidence-based practices were identified in the category of Interagency Collaboration. Each practice and supporting evidence is summarized in Tables 2 through 5.

### Student-Focused Planning

Table 2 lists three practices with a moderate level of evidence in the area of student-focused planning. All three practices reflected instruction around student participation in the educational planning process (i.e., IEP meeting participation). One practice was more general

(i.e., promoting student involvement in the IEP meeting) and included multiple methods for skill instruction and two of the practices were specific (i.e., *Self-Advocacy Strategy*, *Self-Directed IEP*).

### Student Development

Table 3 lists 25 evidence-based practices identified in the area of Student Development. Two practices had strong levels of evidence, 22 had a moderate level of evidence, and 1 had a potential level of evidence. There were 17 practices identified in life skills, 6 in employment skills, and 2 in functional academics.

### Family Involvement

Table 4 lists one evidence-based practice in the category of Family Involvement. A moderate level of evidence was identified for the practice of family training on transition issues.

### Program Structures

Table 5 lists three practices in the category of Program Structures, two with a moderate level of evidence and one with a potential level of evidence. Practices included providing flexible programming, having outcome-based curricula and programs, and using community-referenced curricula.

### Interagency Collaboration

No evidence-based practices were identified in this category.

## Discussion

This review of the literature used quality indicator checklists for group (Gersten et al., 2005) and single

**Table 3**  
**Summary of Evidence-Based Practices in Student Development**

Practice	Level of Evidence	Current Evidence
Teaching life skills	A <i>strong</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality meta-analysis of 50 intervention studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alwell &amp; Cobb (2006b)</li> </ul>
Teaching purchasing skills	A <i>strong</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality meta-analysis of 28 intervention studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Xin, Grasso, Dipipi-Hoy, &amp; Jitendra (2005)</li> </ul>
Teaching banking skills	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 3 acceptable-quality single subject studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberto, Cihak, &amp; Gama (2005)</li> <li>• Cihak, Alberto, Kessler, &amp; Taber (2004)</li> <li>• McDonnell &amp; Ferguson (1989)</li> <li>• Nelson, Smith, &amp; Dodd (1994)</li> </ul>
Teaching completing a job application	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality group study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fiscus, Schuster, Morse, &amp; Collins (2002)</li> <li>• Mechling, Gast, &amp; Fields (2008)</li> <li>• Steege, Wacker, &amp; McMahon (1987)</li> <li>• Trask-Tyler, Grossi, &amp; Heward (1994)</li> <li>• Bates, Cuvo, Miner, &amp; Korabek (2001)</li> </ul>
Teaching cooking skills	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality and 3 acceptable-quality single subject studies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arnold-Reid, Schloss, &amp; Alper (1997)</li> <li>• Lancioni &amp; O'Reilly (2002)</li> <li>• Mechling &amp; Gast (1997)</li> <li>• Steege et al. (1987)</li> <li>• Trask-Tyler et al. (1994)</li> </ul>
Teaching employment skills using community-based instruction	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 acceptable-quality literature review of 23 studies and 4 acceptable-quality single subject studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberto et al. (2005)</li> <li>• Birkan (2005)</li> <li>• Bates et al. (2001)</li> <li>• Denny &amp; Test (1995)</li> <li>• McDonnell &amp; Ferguson (1989)</li> <li>• Browder &amp; Shear (1996)</li> <li>• Mechling (2004)</li> <li>• Mechling &amp; Gast (2003)</li> <li>• Mechling, Gast, &amp; Langone (2002)</li> <li>• Schloss et al. (1995)</li> <li>• Ayres, Langone, Boon, &amp; Norman (2006)</li> <li>• Bates et al. (2001)</li> <li>• Mechling (2004)</li> <li>• Morse &amp; Schuster (1996)</li> </ul>
Teaching food preparation skills	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality group experimental study and 4 acceptable-quality single subject studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arnold-Reid, Schloss, &amp; Alper (1997)</li> <li>• Lancioni &amp; O'Reilly (2002)</li> <li>• Mechling &amp; Gast (1997)</li> <li>• Steege et al. (1987)</li> <li>• Trask-Tyler et al. (1994)</li> </ul>
Teaching functional math skills	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality group experimental study and 4 acceptable-quality single subject studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arnold-Reid, Schloss, &amp; Alper (1997)</li> <li>• Lancioni &amp; O'Reilly (2002)</li> <li>• Mechling &amp; Gast (1997)</li> <li>• Steege et al. (1987)</li> <li>• Trask-Tyler et al. (1994)</li> </ul>
Teaching functional reading skills	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 5 acceptable-quality single subject studies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arnold-Reid, Schloss, &amp; Alper (1997)</li> <li>• Lancioni &amp; O'Reilly (2002)</li> <li>• Mechling &amp; Gast (1997)</li> <li>• Steege et al. (1987)</li> <li>• Trask-Tyler et al. (1994)</li> </ul>
Teaching grocery shopping skills	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 acceptable-quality systematic literature review of 20 studies, 1 high-quality group experimental study, and 2 acceptable-quality single subject studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arnold-Reid, Schloss, &amp; Alper (1997)</li> <li>• Lancioni &amp; O'Reilly (2002)</li> <li>• Mechling &amp; Gast (1997)</li> <li>• Steege et al. (1987)</li> <li>• Trask-Tyler et al. (1994)</li> </ul>
Teaching home maintenance skills	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality single subject study and 4 acceptable-quality single subject studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arnold-Reid, Schloss, &amp; Alper (1997)</li> <li>• Lancioni &amp; O'Reilly (2002)</li> <li>• Mechling &amp; Gast (1997)</li> <li>• Steege et al. (1987)</li> <li>• Trask-Tyler et al. (1994)</li> </ul>
Teaching leisure skills	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 4 acceptable-quality single subject studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arnold-Reid, Schloss, &amp; Alper (1997)</li> <li>• Lancioni &amp; O'Reilly (2002)</li> <li>• Mechling &amp; Gast (1997)</li> <li>• Steege et al. (1987)</li> <li>• Trask-Tyler et al. (1994)</li> </ul>
Teaching life skills using community-based instruction	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality group study and 4 acceptable-quality single subject studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arnold-Reid, Schloss, &amp; Alper (1997)</li> <li>• Lancioni &amp; O'Reilly (2002)</li> <li>• Mechling &amp; Gast (1997)</li> <li>• Steege et al. (1987)</li> <li>• Trask-Tyler et al. (1994)</li> </ul>
Teaching life skills using computer-assisted instruction	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality single subject study and 3 acceptable-quality single subject studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arnold-Reid, Schloss, &amp; Alper (1997)</li> <li>• Lancioni &amp; O'Reilly (2002)</li> <li>• Mechling &amp; Gast (1997)</li> <li>• Steege et al. (1987)</li> <li>• Trask-Tyler et al. (1994)</li> </ul>

(continued)

**Table 3 (continued)**

Practice	Level of Evidence	Current Evidence
Teaching life skills using self-management	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality group experimental study, 1 high-quality single subject study, and 2 acceptable-quality single subject studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bates et al. (2001)</li> <li>• Faloon &amp; Rehfeldt (2008)</li> <li>• Gumpel &amp; Nativ-Ari-Am (2001)</li> <li>• Taylor (1987)</li> </ul>
Teaching job-specific employment skills	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality group study, 1 high-quality single subject study, and 4 acceptable-quality single subject studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bates et al. (2001)</li> <li>• Cihak et al. (2004)</li> <li>• Mechling &amp; Gast (1997)</li> <li>• Mechling &amp; Ortega-Hurndon (2007)</li> <li>• Mitchell, Schuster, Collins, &amp; Gassaway (2000)</li> <li>• Riffel et al. (2005)</li> </ul>
Teaching job-specific employment skills using computer-assisted instruction	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 3 acceptable-quality single subject studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mechling &amp; Gast (1997)</li> <li>• Mechling &amp; Ortega-Hurndon (2007)</li> <li>• Riffel et al. (2005)</li> </ul>
Teaching purchasing using the "one more than" strategy	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 6 acceptable-quality single subject studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ayres et al. (2006)</li> <li>• Colyer &amp; Collins (1996)</li> <li>• Denny &amp; Test (1995)</li> <li>• Haring, Kennedy, Adams, &amp; Pitts-Conway (1987)</li> <li>• McDonnell, Horner, &amp; Williams (1984)</li> <li>• Test, Howell, Burkhart, &amp; Beroth (1993)</li> </ul>
Teaching restaurant purchasing skills	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality group experimental study and 1 acceptable-quality single subject study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bates et al. (2001)</li> <li>• McDonnell (1984)</li> </ul>
Teaching safety skills	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality single subject study and 6 acceptable-quality single subject studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collins, Stinson, &amp; Land (1993)</li> <li>• Gast &amp; Winterling (1992)</li> <li>• O'Reilly, Green, &amp; Braunling-McMorrow (1990)</li> <li>• Taber, Alberto, Hughes, &amp; Seltzer (2002)</li> <li>• Taber, Alberto, Seltzer, &amp; Hughes (2003)</li> <li>• Winterling, Gast, Wolery, &amp; Farmer (1992)</li> <li>• VanReusen &amp; Bos (1994)</li> </ul>
Teaching self-advocacy skills	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality group experimental study	
Teaching self-determination skills	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality meta-analysis of 51 intervention studies of predominantly acceptable quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test, &amp; Wood (2001)</li> </ul>
Teaching self-management for employment skills	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 acceptable-quality systematic literature review of 35 studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lancioni &amp; O'Reilly (2002)</li> </ul>
Social skills training	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality meta-analysis of 10 intervention studies of predominantly moderate effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alwell &amp; Cobb (2007)</li> </ul>
Teaching job-related social communication skills	A <i>potential</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality single subject study and 1 acceptable-quality single subject study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clement-Heist, Seigel, &amp; Gaylord-Ross (1992)</li> <li>• Heller, Allgood, Ware, &amp; Castelle (1996)</li> </ul>

**Table 4**  
**Summary of Evidence-Based Practices in Family Involvement**

Practice	Level of Evidence	Current Evidence
Teaching parents and families about transition	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality group experimental study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boone (1992)</li> </ul>



**Table 5**  
**Summary of Evidence-Based Practices in Program Structures**

Practice	Level of evidence	Current Evidence
Provide community-based instruction	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality group study, 1 high-quality single-subject study, and 6 acceptable-quality single subject studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alberto, Cihak, &amp; Gama (2005)</li> <li>• Ayres, Langone, Boon, &amp; Norman (2006)</li> <li>• Bates, Cuvo, Miner, &amp; Korabek (2001)</li> <li>• Cihak, Alberto, Kessler, &amp; Taber (2004)</li> <li>• Heller, Allgood, Ware, &amp; Castelle (1996)</li> <li>• Mechling &amp; Ortega- Hurndon (2007)</li> <li>• Schloss et al. (1995)</li> <li>• Taylor, Collins, Schuster, &amp; Kleinert (2002)</li> </ul>
Structure program to extend services beyond secondary school	A <i>moderate</i> level of evidence based on 1 high-quality group experimental study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Izzo, Cartledge, Miller, Growick, &amp; Rutkowski (2000)</li> </ul>
Implement <i>Check &amp; Connect</i> program for students with disabilities	A <i>potential</i> level of evidence based on 1 acceptable-quality group study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sinclair, Christensen, &amp; Thurlow (2005)</li> </ul>

subject research (Horner et al., 2005) developed for identifying evidence-based practices. Based on the quality of research, levels of evidence for specific practices in secondary transition were determined. Using this process, 32 evidence-based practices in the field of secondary transition were identified. The majority of practices were in the category of Student Development. Given that this area involves teaching functional skills (e.g., vocational, school, leisure) to students, it is not surprising that this category would be supported by group and single-subject research studies. These results extend the literature on evidence-based practices for students with disabilities to the field of secondary transition. Although the WWC has posted practices in a variety of areas, only character education and dropout prevention include practices designed for transition-aged students.

## Limitations

The findings of this review are limited in a number of ways. First, it was not a comprehensive review of each practice. That is, once a practice was identified as having a strong level of evidence, further studies on that practice were not reviewed. Second, because our purpose was to identify an initial set of evidence-based practices in the field of secondary transition, we allowed each “practice” to emerge based on the literature that met the quality indicators. For example, as we identified studies that met our inclusion criteria, we began to group studies by the dependent variable (i.e., skill) that was taught in the study. This resulted in general practices, such as “Involving

Students in the IEP Process,” which included a range of practices for teaching students to participate in and lead IEP meetings. However, as additional studies were identified we were also able to identify specific practices, such as “Using the *Self-Advocacy Strategy*” and “Using the *Self-Directed IEP*” because enough high- or acceptable-quality studies had been conducted on each practice. This approach is different from the one used by WWC and proposed by CEC, in which a specific practice is first defined and then the literature is reviewed to determine if enough research exists to classify the practice as having a strong, moderate, or weak level of evidence. Third, in most cases, practices were labeled by the dependent variable (or skill learned) rather than the independent variable. This was done because it was assumed that a practitioner’s focus would be on teaching a specific skill (i.e., making a purchase) rather than the method used to teach the skill (i.e., constant time delay). The exception to this was in the Taxonomy category of Program Structures (e.g., using community based instruction). Fourth, to be an evidence-based practice, typically research studies must first meet a set of quality indicators, and then provide evidence of effect. For the studies that used single subject designs, the quality indicator checklist included an item that required determining the existence of a functional relationship; although this did allow an effect to be identified, it did not allow a calculation of the size of the effect. Although a functional relationship does imply a “robust” independent variable (Baer, 1977), it does not quantify the effect size as the Percentage of Non-Overlapping Data (PND; Scruggs & Mastropieri,

2001), Percentage of All Non-Overlapping Data (PAND; Parker, Hagan-Burke, & Vannest, K., 2007), or the Improvement Rate Difference (IRD; Parker, Vannest, & Brown, 2009) have been suggested to do for single subject designs. Neither PNDs, PANDs, nor IRDs were calculated for the single subject studies used in this review. However, because the group design quality indicators checklist did not include an assessment of intervention "effects," we did attempt to calculate effect sizes for the six group studies used in our review (i.e., Bates, Cuvo, Miner, & Korabek, 2001; Izzo, Cartledge, Miller, Growick, & Rutkowski, 2000; Martin et al., 2006; Nelson, Smith, & Dodd, 1994; Sinclair, Christensen, and Thurlow (2005); Van Reusen & Bos, 1994). Using Cohen's  $d$ , effect sizes were  $d = 0.334$  (Self-Advocacy Strategy; Van Reusen & Bos, 1994),  $d = 0.588$  (extending services beyond secondary school; Izzo et al., 2000), and  $d = 1.53$  (teaching job applications; Nelson et al., 1994). Effect sizes for the other three studies were not, or could not be, calculated.

### Suggestions for Future Research

A byproduct of identifying evidence-based practices is the recognition of research needed to improve the level of evidence for specific practices to "strong." (See Table 6.) Table 6 indicates a continued need for more experimental research (using group and/or single subject research designs) to establish "strong" levels of evidence for many secondary transition practices. At this point there are only two practices that have a strong level of evidence (i.e., teaching life skills and teaching purchasing skills). Both are in the Taxonomy category of Student Development, which also includes 22 of the *moderate* practices and 1 *potential* practice. There are three *moderate* level practices in Student-Focused Planning, and the remaining *moderate* or *potential* practices are in Family Involvement or Program Structures. No evidence-based practices have been found in the category of Interagency Collaboration. In addition, many secondary-transition related skills (e.g., managing finances, physical fitness, travel, healthy living, engaging in civic activities, maintaining employment) do not appear to have any evidence base. Although there is clearly much to be done, careful attention needs to be paid to ensuring that this research meets the quality indicators for group and/or single subject designs.

Finally, although the evidence-based practices identified by this review do provide practitioners with strategies for teaching specific skills, the literature reviewed did not correlate student skill development with improved postschool outcomes. Research is needed to link these

evidence-based practices with postschool outcomes, such as employment, education/training, and quality of life.

### Implications for Practice

The current list provides practitioners with a starting point for implementing evidence-based practices. Are they guaranteed to work? No, but practitioners can be confident that practices with strong and moderate levels of evidence will produce similar effects with their students. Practitioners will still need to use their professional judgment to select practices for their students. To help them with this process, further information about each practice can be found at <http://www.nsttac.org> under "Evidence-Based Practices." At this website, each practice is described in terms of the supporting evidence, with whom it was implemented (i.e., disability labels, gender, ethnicity if provided), what the practice is, how and where it has been implemented, how the practice relates to State Performance Plan Part B Indicator 13 and national standards, where the best place to find out how to do the practice is, and references used to establish the current evidence base.

In addition, for each practice description there is a set of research-to-practice lesson plan starters listed under the section "The best place to find out how to do this practice." All lesson plan starters can also be found in the Lesson Plan Library at <http://www.nsttac.org>. Each starter includes the basic information needed to write a lesson including an objective, setting/materials, content to be taught, teaching procedure, and evaluation ideas. All information for each lesson plan starter was taken directly from a study used to identify the level of evidence for a practice.

Both the practice descriptions and lesson plan starters were developed to help state and local education agencies use evidence-based practices in classrooms. In addition, because the evidence-based practices are categorized by the Taxonomy, which is a widely accepted framework for comprehensive secondary transition programs, state and local education agency personnel should use the practices listed under each category of the Taxonomy as starting points for providing quality transition services to students. This same logic can be applied to improving SPP Part B Indicator 13 outcomes, in that these evidence-based practices should serve as the starting point for writing annual goals and transition services designed to help students achieve their postschool goals.

In conclusion, the results of this review provide practitioners with a set of evidence-based practices for improving transition services and researchers with an agenda for conducting future research to help establish additional secondary transition instructional practices as having a

**Table 6**  
**Intervention Research Needed to Enhance the Level of Evidence to Strong**

Practice	Current Level of Evidence	Research Needed
<b>Student-Focused Planning</b>		
Involving students in the individual education plan (IEP) process	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 high-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
<i>Self-Advocacy Strategy</i>	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 high-quality group experimental study or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
<i>Self-Directed IEP</i>	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 high-quality group experimental study or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• Five high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
<b>Student Development (Life Skills Instruction)</b>		
Teaching life skills	Strong	None
Teaching purchasing skills	Strong	None
Teaching self-advocacy skills	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 high-quality group experimental study or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Teaching self-determination skills	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 high-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Functional reading sight words	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 high-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Functional math skills	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 high-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Banking skills	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 high-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Cooking skills	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 high-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Food preparation skills	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 high-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Grocery shopping skills	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 high-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Home maintenance skills	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 high-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Leisure Skills	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 high-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Restaurant Purchasing Skills	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 high-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Purchasing using the “one more than” strategy	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 high-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Safety skills	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 high-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Social skills training	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 high-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>

(continued)

**Table 6 (continued)**

Practice	Current Level of Evidence	Research Needed
Life skills using community-based instruction	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 high-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Life skills using computer-assisted instruction	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 high-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Life skills using self-management	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 high-quality group experimental study or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
<b>Student Development (Employment Skills Instruction)</b>		
Job-specific employment skills	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 high-quality group experimental study or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Job-specific employment skills using computer-assisted instruction	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 high-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Completing a job application	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 high-quality group experimental study or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Employment skills using community-based instruction	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 high-quality group experimental study or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Teaching self-management for employment skills	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 high-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Job-related social/communication skills	Potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 high-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
<b>Family Involvement</b>		
Teaching parents and families about transition	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 high-quality group experimental study or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
<b>Program Structure</b>		
Provide community-based instruction	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 high-quality group experimental study or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 4 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
Structure program to extend services beyond secondary school	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 high-quality group experimental study or</li> <li>• 4 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>
<i>Check &amp; Connect</i>	Potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 high-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 3 acceptable-quality group experimental studies or</li> <li>• 5 high-quality single subject studies</li> </ul>

*strong* level of evidence using quality indicators established for group experimental research (Gersten et al., 2005) and single subject research designs (Horner et al., 2005). As schools place increased emphasis on teacher use of evidence-based practices in their instruction, in order to insure that secondary transition services are not left out, we must commit to identifying and using secondary transition practices having *strong* levels of evidence.

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